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NSC FOR ABRAMS/SINGH/MARCHESE/HARDING

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [LE](#) [SY](#) [SP](#)

SUBJECT: LEBANON: RELIEF FOLLOWED BY DISMAY OVER MORATINOS'  
VISIT

Classified By: Jeffrey Feltman, Ambassador, per 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) During a meeting with the Ambassador on 7/31, PM Siniora expressed relief that, in his view, Spanish Foreign Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos, who had visited Lebanon earlier in the week, was finally waking up to the mischief and havoc Syria was foisting onto Lebanon. He expressed satisfaction at the tough message that Moratinos told him he would deliver to the Syrians, which Siniora interpreted as indication that the Spanish believe Syria to be somehow complicit in the 6/24 attack on the Spanish UNIFIL contingent. Separately, March 14 leaders Walid Jumblatt and Samir Geagea, both of whom met Moratinos, expressed similar delight in what they saw as surprising, stiffened Spanish spine regarding Syrian misbehavior.

¶2. (C) On the margins of an 8/1 dinner, however, Mohamad Chatah (Senior Advisor to PM Siniora) told the Ambassador that Siniora's relief had turned to alarm after Moratinos, back in Madrid, called Siniora to brief him on his Damascus meetings. Moratinos had returned to his Syrian-apologist usual form. Chatah had monitored the phone call and described Moratinos as "thrilled, gushing" with his 45-minute tete-a-tete with Syrian President Bashar al-Asad. Moratinos told Siniora of "five promises," which Moratinos was convinced Bashar would keep: support of an unspecified initiative from Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri to solve Lebanon's political crisis, facilitation for Lebanon's presidential elections, support for a National Unity Government after elections, support for a new National Unity cabinet program, and the establishment of normal diplomatic relations after the presidential elections.

¶3. (C) As described by Chatah, Siniora found Moratinos' embrace of the Syrian promises to be naive. Moratinos did not seem to recognize that, in accepting Bashar's promises as fact, he was inviting Syrian interference back into Lebanon. He seemed to have extracted no promises about the Special Tribunal for Lebanon, which did not seem to have even come up. Moratinos did not have the details of what Syrian support or facilitation would mean, and he could not explain to Siniora what the so-called Berri initiative was. In short, Syria once again fooled Moratinos, Siniora (according to Chatah) concluded, with Syria able to claim victory through Moratinos' engagement.

¶4. (C) Chatah described Siniora as particularly concerned by Moratinos' references to what he called the "Moratinos-Kouchner initiative," which Siniora believed to be an attempt by Moratinos to attach himself to the French

Foreign Minister's ongoing diplomatic efforts. Chatah said that this risked moving the French in counterproductive directions, as Moratinos would be nudging them toward greater interaction with Syria. Siniora did not want the French efforts to be diluted with Spanish meddling, as (in Siniora's view) Moratinos will be far more willing to compromise with Damascus than will Paris. Responding to our question, Chatah said that Siniora would be raising this concern with the French when he meets with outgoing French Ambassador Bernard Emie later on 8/2.

FELTMAN